

DL - 03 - 00

A



Please type a plus sign (+) inside this box [+]

PTO/SB/05 (12/97)

Approved for use through 09/30/00. OMB 0651-0032

Patent and Trademark Office: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.



UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 042390.P7452

Total Pages 5

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier Iksoo Pyo

Express Mail Label No. EL431889826US

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, D. C. 20231

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. Fee Transmittal Form
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. Specification (Total Pages 28)
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
 - Descriptive Title of the Invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claims
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. Drawings(s) (35 USC 113) (Total Sheets 8)
4. Oath or Declaration (Total Pages 5)
 - a. Newly Executed (Original or Copy) (unsigned)
 - b. Copy from a Prior Application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
(for Continuation/Divisional with Box 17 completed) (Note Box 5 below)
 - i. DELETIONS OF INVENTOR(S) Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.
6. Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)

7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission

(if applicable, all necessary)

- a. Computer Readable Copy
- b. Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
- c. Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documents(s))

- a. 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement (where there is an assignee)

- b. Power of Attorney

10. English Translation Document (if applicable)

11. a. Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449

- b. Copies of IDS Citations

12. Preliminary Amendment

13. Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)

14. a. Small Entity Statement(s)

- b. Statement filed in prior application, Status still proper and desired

15. Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)

16. Other: a copy of the postcard with Certificate of Express Mailing

17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:

Continuation Divisional Continuation-in-part (CIP)

of prior application No: _____

18. Correspondence Address

Customer Number or Bar Code Label

(Insert Customer No. or Attach Bar Code Label here)

or

Correspondence Address Below

NAME Cynthia Thomas Faatz, Reg. No. 39,973 Cynthia Thomas Faatz
BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP 12/30/97

ADDRESS 12400 Wilshire Boulevard

Seventh Floor

CITY Los Angeles STATE California ZIP CODE 90025-1026

Country U.S.A. TELEPHONE (408) 720-8598 FAX (408) 720-9397

12/01/97

- 2 -

PTO/SB/05 (12/97)

Approved for use through 09/30/00. OMB 0651-0032
Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

42390.P7452

PATENT

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

for

A METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR ROUTING USING DEFERRED MERGING

Inventors:

Iksoo Pyo
Michelle Yu

Prepared by:

BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP
12400 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1026
(408) 720-8598

"Express Mail" mailing label number: EL431889826US

Date of Deposit: December 30, 1999

I hereby certify that I am causing this paper or fee to be deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service on the date indicated above and that this paper or fee has been addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D. C. 20231

Conny Willesen
(Typed or printed name of person mailing paper or fee)

Conny Willesen
(Signature of person mailing paper or fee)

12-30-99
(Date signed)

A METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR ROUTING USING DEFERRED MERGING

BACKGROUND

1. Field

5 An embodiment of the present invention relates to the field of computer-aided design and, more particularly, to routing for integrated circuit designs.

2. Discussion of Related Art

A sequential routing approach is commonly used to determine wire routing for an integrated circuit design. Referring to Figure 1, for example, a sequential

10 approach may be used to route wires between X and X', Y and Y' and Z and Z'.

For purposes of example, it is assumed that there are only three tracks available for routing in the vertical direction and only four tracks in the horizontal direction as indicated by the dotted lines.

A first wire may be routed between X and X' as shown. The wire between 15 X and X' then becomes an obstacle for all subsequently routed wires. When the route is to be determined for Y and Y', however, there is no available routing solution within the grid shown. To route Y and Y' and then Z and Z', the wire between X and X' is ripped up and rerouted.

If the wire between X and X' is rerouted as shown in Figure 2, Y and Y' 20 may be routed as shown, but there is then no available routing solution for Z and Z'. Both of the wires shown in Figure 2 are then ripped up and rerouted.

Ripping up and rerouting wires can be time and resource intensive and may still not select a globally optimal routing for the wires to be routed. Further, even

where rip-up-re-routing is not necessary or where it is used and successful in routing all of the desired wires, because of the sequential nature of the routing, the routing selected for the first wire may cause less desirable routings to be selected for subsequent wires.

- 5 Referring to Figure 3, sequential routing may also be used to route multi-terminal nets. For one approach, a minimal spanning tree (indicated by the dotted line) may be used to identify the shortest distance between each of the terminals A, B, C and D in the net of Figure 3. The wire between A and B may be routed first, followed by the wire between B and C and the wire between C
- 10 and D. The routing for each of these wires is selected sequentially, with little if any information about subsequent wires to be routed. Thus, this type of routing approach may also not provide a globally optimized solution.

Objective-driven routing is another routing approach in which objectives (also referred to as cost functions) such as density, timing, congestion, jog
15 and/or cross-talk, for example, may be specified. Objective-driven routers, to the extent possible, determine wire routes according to the specified objective(s). Currently available objective-driven routers, however, may not do an acceptable job of mixing together multiple objectives that may indicate conflicting results.

- Controllability may also be an issue for some objective-driven routers.
- 20 Conventional objective-driven routers typically do not provide for designers to select objectives on the fly. Thus, if a routing pass begins with a first specified objective, it may not be straightforward to change objectives without having to perform the entire routing pass again.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings in which like references indicate similar elements, and in which:

5 **Figure 1** is a diagram showing a routing solution for a wire between pins X and X' that may be selected by a conventional sequential router.

Figure 2 is a diagram showing routing solutions for a first wire between pins X and X' and second wire between pins Y and Y' that may be selected by a conventional sequential router.

10 **Figure 3** shows a routing solution that may be selected by a conventional sequential router for a multi-terminal net.

Figure 4 is a flow diagram showing a method of one embodiment for routing using a deferred merging technique.

15 **Figure 5** is a diagram showing a routing tree that may be developed for the routing example of **Figures 1 and 2** using the routing method of **Figure 4**.

Figure 6 is a flow diagram showing a method of another embodiment for routing using a deferred merging technique.

Figure 7 shows a routing tree that may be developed for the routing example of **Figure 3** using the deferred merging technique of **Figure 6**.

20 **Figure 8** is a flow diagram showing a method of one embodiment for identifying (partial) feasible solutions.

Figure 9 is a flow diagram showing a method of one embodiment for merging partial feasible solutions.

Figure 10 is a simplified block diagram of a computer system that may be used to implement the method of one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- 5 A method and apparatus for routing using deferred merging is described. For one embodiment, where a set of wires is to be routed, partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of a subset of the wires to be routed are identified. The partial feasible routing solutions are then merged to identify one or more feasible routing solutions for the set of wires. For one embodiment, the
10 (partial) feasible routing solutions are ordered by one or more user-selected cost functions so that a relatively more desirable routing solution may be more easily selected as described in more detail below.

Figure 4 is a flow diagram showing a method of one embodiment for routing wires for an integrated circuit device using a deferred merging technique.

- 15 The method of **Figure 4** is described with reference to a routing example shown in **Figure 5**. In the example of **Figure 5**, like the example of **Figures 1 and 2**, wires are to be routed between X and X', Y and Y' and Z and Z'. For purposes of simplicity, the notation XX' is used to refer to the wire to be routed between X and X'. Similarly, YY' refers to the wire to be routed between Y and Y', etc.
20 At block 405, partial feasible routing solutions are determined for each of a subset of wires to be routed where the subset may include some or all of the wires to be routed. A partial feasible routing solution, as the term is used herein, refers to an intermediate routing solution for fewer than all of the wires to be

routed while a feasible routing solution is a routing solution for all of the wires to be routed. A routing solution is feasible if it defines a route between the desired terminals or pins while avoiding obstacles and otherwise meeting specified design rules.

- 5 For the example of Figure 5, partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of XX', YY' and ZZ' as shown by plan view diagrams 501, 502 and 503, respectively. As in the example of Figures 1 and 2, only three vertical and four horizontal tracks are available for routing XX', YY' and ZZ'. For this example, all feasible routes are identified for each of the corresponding wires
- 10 when identifying the partial feasible routing solutions.

For other embodiments, however, the number of (partial) feasible routing solutions at any given level in a routing tree may be limited according to designer-specified constraints. Further, for some embodiments, as (partial) feasible routing solutions are identified, they may be ordered according to one or more cost functions. Additional details of these embodiments and the manner in which partial feasible routing solutions may be identified are described below with reference to Figures 6-8.

For each of XX', YY' and ZZ', there are three different feasible routes as shown in the corresponding plan view diagrams 501-503 and clarified in the

20 corresponding diagrams 506-508. A group of feasible routes corresponding to a particular wire or group of wires may be referred to herein as a partial feasible routing tree. Thus, each of the blocks 506, 507 and 508 may be considered to represent a partial feasible routing tree for the corresponding wire.

For one embodiment, each partial feasible routing solution identified at block 405 is stored in a memory using X,Y coordinates to indicate, along a centerline of the respective wire, a relative location of source and sink pins and any intermediate jogs (i.e. changes in direction) in the wire. Additionally, the

- 5 width of the wire and the corresponding layer(s) of the integrated circuit in which the wire is located may be indicated. For solution (1) in the block 506 corresponding to XX', for example, the coordinates [(X1,Y1), (X2,Y1), (X2,Y2), (X3,Y2)] may be stored along with the width of the wire and the layer in which the wire is to be routed. While the example of Figure 5 is a one layer routing
- 10 example, some wires may traverse multiple layers. Other partial feasible routing solutions may be stored in a similar manner.

Referring back to Figure 4, at block 410, partial feasible routing solutions identified at block 405 and organized into partial feasible routing trees are then merged, N partial feasible routing trees at a time (where N may be any integer).

- 15 Any group of N partial feasible routing trees is only merged at this point if there is at least one feasible merged solution. At block 415, merged (partial) feasible solution(s) for the merged partial feasible routing trees are identified.

In identifying the merged (partial) feasible routing solutions, any merged solution that includes conflicting routes is not included. Conflicting routes, as the

- 20 term is used herein, refers to routes that overlap, plow through, or are closer than specified design rule spacings to another route. The approach of one embodiment for identifying conflicting routes is described in more detail below.

For one embodiment, N is equal to 2. For the example of Figure 5, where N is 2, the partial feasible routing tree corresponding to XX' may be merged with the partial feasible routing tree corresponding to YY' at block 410. At block 415, there are only three partial feasible solutions for the merged combination of XX' and YY' that do not create conflicting routes as shown in the table 510. For example, the first partial feasible solution for XX' (i.e. XX'(1) in the block 506) cannot be merged with any partial feasible routing solution for YY' without creating conflicting routes. Thus, there are no merged partial feasible routing solutions for XX' and YY' that include XX'(1). Once identified, the merged (partial) feasible routing solutions may be stored in a memory in a similar manner to the partial feasible solutions described above for XX'.

Referring back to Figure 4, at decision block 420, it is determined whether all partial feasible routing trees have been merged. For one embodiment, it is determined that all partial feasible routing trees have been merged if all pins/ports have been merged into a single node (tree). If not, the method continues at block 410 where merged partial feasible routing trees are again merged N at a time.

For the example of Figure 5, at decision block 420, it is determined that the partial feasible routing tree for ZZ' has not been merged. Thus, at block 410, the partial feasible routing tree for ZZ', represented by the block 508, is merged with the partial feasible routing tree for XX' and YY' represented by the table 510. As described above, this merging is only undertaken if at least one merged (partial) feasible solution exists. For the example of Figure 5, where the partial

routing tree for ZZ' is merged with the partial routing tree for XX' and YY', only one merged feasible solution exists as shown in the block 512.

At decision block 420, it is then determined that all partial feasible routing trees have been merged. For one embodiment, when all partial feasible routing
5 trees have been merged, the resulting data structure is referred to as a routing tree and the root of the routing tree is one or more feasible routing solutions.

At block 425, routes for the set of wires to be routed are selected from the feasible routing solutions that have been identified by merging all partial routing trees together in one or more merging passes. For the example of Figure 5, only
10 one feasible routing solution exists, and thus, the wires are selected to be routed in this manner as shown in the plan view diagram 514.

Where multiple feasible routing solutions are identified, the cheapest route, according to one or more designer-specified cost functions, may be selected. Because the wires are not routed until partial feasible solutions are
15 identified and merged, the above-described routing approach is referred to herein as deferred merging or deferred routing.

Using the above approach, it may be possible to identify one or more feasible routing solutions for a set of wires to be routed without having to rip up and reroute previously routed wires when a conflict with a new wire to be routed
20 is identified. In this manner, the above-described approach may help to speed up the routing process. Further, it may be possible using this technique to identify more globally optimized routing solutions because wire routes are not determined in a sequential manner.

As described in more detail below, controllability and prioritization features of various embodiments can provide additional benefits.

Referring to Figure 6, a method of another embodiment for routing using deferred merging is described. Figure 7 shows a particular routing example

5 similar to the routing example of Figure 3 and is referenced in the description of Figure 6 for purposes of illustration.

For one embodiment, the below-described method may be performed using software that receives as input data, an integrated circuit device floorplan, a netlist indicating ports/pins between which wires are to be routed, obstacles

10 (also referred to as keep-out regions or KORs), and user-specified constraints and/or parameters as described below. Output data from the process is a final routing and, for some embodiments, cost information that may be in the form of a cost graph, for example.

At block 605 partial feasible routing solutions are determined for each of a subset of wires to be routed. Where many wires are to be routed, the particular wires for which the lowest level partial feasible routing solutions are determined may be selected in a number of different ways. For one embodiment, Prim's algorithm may be used to identify sets of pins that are closest to each other and correspond to a same net (i.e. a wire is to be routed between them). Prim's

15 algorithm is an algorithm that may be used to develop a minimum spanning tree and is described in more detail in Prim, "Shortest Connecting Networks," Bell System Technical Journal, vol. 31, 1957, pp. 1398-1409. For other

20 embodiments, other algorithms (e.g. Kruskal's algorithm, J. B. Kruskal, "On the

Shortest Spanning Subtree of a Graph and the Traveling Salesman Problem,"
Proceedings of the American Mathematical Society, Vol. 7, pp. 48-50, 1956)
and/or other approaches, such as identification of critical routes to be routed first,
may be used to select the first wires for which partial feasible solutions are to be
5 determined.

Partial feasible routing solutions between the selected pins may be
determined using a conventional maze router for one embodiment. Referring to
Figure 8, at block 805, Hanan's graph (e.g. dotted line graph in Figure 1) is
generated and a first partial feasible solution is generated using the maze router.

10 Hanan's graph is a well-known approach for defining a solution space for routing
solutions. Hanan's graph is described, for example, in M. Hanan, "On Steiner's
Problem with Rectilinear Distance," SIAM Journal of Applied Mathematics, pp.
255-265, March 1966.

This process is repeated at block 810 with the addition and/or deletion of
15 obstacles, also referred to as keep-out-regions or KORs in Hanan's graph.

Referring to Figure 5, for example, a KOR may be inserted for the first solution in
506 at X_2Y_2 or X_2Y_1 . By inserting a KOR in a previous solution, the next solution
generated will be unique. At decision block 815, it is determined whether all
partial feasible solutions have been identified and/or whether a user-specified
20 partial feasible solution limitation (see below) has been reached. If not, the
method continues at block 810 until all partial feasible solutions have been
identified or a user-specified limitation has been reached. Using this approach, it
is possible to identify all feasible routes between the two selected pins. It will be

appreciated that other types of routers such as a pattern router, for example, may also be used to identify feasible solutions.

As mentioned above, for some embodiments, the number of partial feasible solutions at a given node in the routing tree may be limited if desired. A designer may specify a heap depth constraint, for example, to limit the number of (partial) feasible solutions saved in a heap corresponding to the node. Other approaches for limiting the number of solutions at a given node are within the scope of various embodiments.

By enabling a designer to specify heap depth for some or all of the nodes in the routing tree, the designer has flexibility and control over memory consumption. In this manner, if the problem is relatively small, for example, the designer may not place limits on the number of partial feasible solutions identified at any given node. Since all partial feasible solutions are then identified and stored, there is a higher confidence that a substantially optimal routing solution will be identified. If instead, however, the problem size is relatively large and/or it is desirable to identify a final routing solution in a given period of time, the designer can place limits on memory consumption while still providing a high quality routing solution.

With continuing reference to Figure 6, at block 610, as partial feasible routing solutions are identified at block 605, they are sorted by one or more cost functions that may also be specified by a designer. By ordering identified partial routing solutions according to the one or more user-specified cost functions,

where heap depth is limited, the partial routing solutions that are more desirable from the standpoint of the specified cost functions are saved in the heap.

Examples of cost functions that may be specified include wire length, source to sink delay, crosstalk, jog, congestion and power. Other types of cost

5 functions may also be specified for various embodiments. To determine the cost associated with a particular partial feasible solution, one or more estimation engines corresponding to the selected cost function(s) may be used. The cost(s) associated with each partial feasible solution is then stored along with the X and Y coordinates, wire width and layer information.

10 Referring now to the example of Figure 7, partial feasible routing solutions are first determined for a wire to be routed between pin A and pin B (AB) and for a wire to be routed between pin C and pin D (CD) in a multi-terminal net. The partial feasible routes for AB are shown in dotted lines in the diagram 705 and are stored as shown in the table 710 while the partial feasible routes for CD are

15 shown in diagram 715 and are stored as shown in the table 720.

For this example, the heap depth has been limited to three for each of the node corresponding to AB and the node corresponding to CD, but, in this case, there are only three feasible solutions for each wire. Also in this example, wire length and worst case source to sink delay have been specified as cost functions

20 against which the identified partial feasible solutions are ordered. The lowest cost solution in terms of these specified cost functions is the first entry (1) in the tables 710 and 720.

Referring back to Figure 6, at block 615, the groups of ordered partial feasible solution(s) identified at blocks 605 and 610 are merged in groups of N to create merged subtrees. Prim's algorithm may be used again for one embodiment to determine the order in which nodes are merged. Other

5 approaches may be used for other embodiments.

For one embodiment, N is 2 such that two routing tree nodes or subtrees are merged at a time. Referring to Figure 9, to merge two or more subtrees, at block 905, the lowest cost partial feasible solution from each of the subtrees (i.e. the first entry in the heap where the entries are ordered by cost function) is

10 selected. It is then determined at block 910 whether merging the lowest cost partial feasible solution from each of the subtrees yields a (partial) feasible merged solution.

This determination may be made, for example, by identifying any conflicts between the partial feasible solutions to be merged and/or by using the method

15 of Figure 8 described above to identify feasible routing solutions to route wires between two partial feasible solutions to be merged. Conflicts may be identified by comparing X, Y coordinates, wire widths and design rule spacings for two wires to see whether they overlap, plow through another wire and/or are separated from another wire by less than design rule spacings. For some

20 embodiments, the user may specify the number of feasible solutions to be identified when merging partial feasible solutions. For the example of Figure 7, for instance, when merging AB and CD, the user may indicate that only two partial feasible routing solutions for BC are to be identified. In this manner, the

user can have some additional control over the overall runtime of the routing process.

If merging the lowest cost partial feasible solution from each of the subtrees does yield a (partial) feasible merged solution, then at block 915, the

- 5 merged (partial) feasible solution is stored in the heap corresponding to the node at which subtrees are being merged. As described above, the identified merged (partial) feasible solutions are stored in the heap in cost order according to the user-identified cost function(s) for one embodiment. Once partial feasible solutions are merged for a multi-terminal net, for one embodiment, the merged
- 10 partial feasible routing becomes a port such that subsequent wires in the net may be coupled to any location on the merged partial feasible solution.

At block 920, it is then determined whether the number of stored (partial) feasible solutions equals the selected heap depth corresponding to the node. If not, the method proceeds at block 925 where it is determined whether any partial feasible solution combinations remain to be evaluated. If so, then at block 905, the next cheapest partial feasible solution combination from the subtrees being merged is selected and the method proceeds as described above.

Referring back to block 910, if the lowest cost partial feasible solutions from each of the subtrees to be merged cannot be merged, then at block 905, a next cheapest partial feasible solution combination may be selected. At block 910, the selected combination is evaluated to determine whether it yields a merged (partial) feasible solution.

At block 920, if the selected heap depth has been reached, the method ends at block 930. Also, at block 925, if there are no more (partial) feasible solution combinations to be evaluated, the method ends at block 930.

Referring back to **Figure 6**, at decision block 630, it is determined whether

- 5 all partial feasible solutions have been merged (i.e. whether all wires have been routed). If not, the method continues at block 615 as described above. If so, then at block 635, the final routing for the set of wires to be routed is identified from the one or more feasible routing solutions indicated by the routing tree developed in the above manner.
- 10 For the example of **Figure 7**, the routing subtree for AB is merged with the routing subtree for CD in the above-described manner to identify the merged feasible routing solutions partially indicated in the diagram and in the table 730. The table 730 indicates how the feasible routing solutions for ABCD may be stored in a heap corresponding to the node ABCD when sorted by wire length
- 15 and source to sink delay with a specified heap depth of four. A cost graph or other cost indicator showing the cost of the routing versus the user-specified cost function(s) may be easily extracted from the routing tree developed in the above manner.

For one embodiment, if, after developing a routing tree in accordance with

- 20 the above-described approach, a designer decides to prioritize a different cost function, it is straightforward to apply the new cost function. When the new cost function is applied, because partial feasible routings have been stored at each node in the routing tree, the heaps corresponding to each node can just be re-

ordered according to the new cost function to identify a lowest cost routing solution. In this manner, the routing tree does not have to be developed (i.e. new sets of partial feasible routings do not need to be identified) for the new cost function.

- 5 Further, if at any level of merging, the merging fails because there is not a feasible merged solution due to limited heap depth at the nodes being merged, it is relatively straightforward to go back down in the routing tree data structure to a lower-level node to identify more feasible solutions to be stored in the heap.
- Merging then proceeds again as described above to arrive at a final routing
- 10 solution.

Using the above-described approach, a routing solution for a set of wires to be routed may be identified efficiently and according to one or more user-specified cost functions. Rip-up-rerouting (which may effectively be similar to an exhaustive search) is not necessary if a particular routing combination is

15 determined not to be feasible, and thus, this approach may provide significant time savings for the routing process.

- The final routing solution may be optimized on a more global basis than a routing solution determined using a conventional sequential router because global cost information is available regarding the feasible routing solutions before
- 20 a final routing is selected. The final routing is not fixed at any point until one of the overall routing solutions identified using the routing tree data structure is selected.

The above approach may be applied to an entire integrated circuit device floorplan or it may be selectively applied to given areas of the floorplan that are more congested, for example, and, thus, may benefit more from a globally optimized routing solution. Further, for some embodiments, an integrated circuit

5 device floorplan may be broken up into various regions that are each routed separately in the above-described manner.

For various embodiments, the user can control memory usage and runtime by specifying the number of solutions to be identified at any given node and/or the heap depth corresponding to the node. In this manner, the user can

10 balance the level of routing optimization versus system resources and final routing time.

For one embodiment, as mentioned above, the method of Figure 4 and/or Figure 6 may be implemented in software 1005 as shown in Figure 10 that is stored in one or more memories 1010 on a computer system 1000 and that

15 includes instructions that are executed by a processor 1015. The memory(ies) 1010 may be any type of memory such as a mass storage device, a network storage device, random access memory, etc., that is accessible by the computer system either directly or indirectly. The computer system may be a workstation, for example, with a UNIX or LINUX operating system. Other types of computer

20 systems using other types of operating systems may be used for other embodiments.

Also stored in the memory(ies) 1010 may be the input information including the floorplan 1020, a netlist 1025 including port/pin information, keep

out region information 1030, and one or more estimation engines 1035 that may be used to identify the cost(s) associated with particular routing solutions. For one embodiment, one estimation engine is provided corresponding to each cost function. A timing estimation engine may be used to determine source to sink

5 delays, for example, while a power estimation engine may be used to estimate power dissipation. Other types of engines evaluate feasible routes against other types of cost functions.

A maze router 1040, which may be used to determine partial feasible routing solutions, may also be stored in the memory 1010 for one embodiment.

10 Storage 1045 for the routing tree data structure may be included along with a user interface 1050 through which a designer may specify the user-controlled features such as heap depth, number of solutions and cost functions to be used.

Output information provided as a layout 1055 including the final routing and, for some embodiments, a cost graph or other cost information 1060, may

15 also be stored in the memory(ies) 1010 or another memory that may be coupled to the computer system 1000.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments thereof. It will, however, be appreciated that various modifications and changes may be made thereto

20 without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims. The specification and drawings are, accordingly, to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

identifying partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of a

5 subset of a set of wires to be routed;

merging the partial feasible routing solutions to identify one or more

feasible routing solutions for the set of wires to be routed.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

10 selecting a routing solution from the feasible routing solutions.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

sorting the identified partial feasible routing solutions and feasible routing
solutions by a first user-selected cost function.

15

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

re-sorting the identified partial feasible routing solutions and feasible
routing solutions by a second, different user-selected cost function.

20

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

limiting the number of partial feasible routing solutions identified to a first
number; and

limiting the number of feasible routing solutions to a second number.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein merging comprises:
merging partial feasible solutions in a routing tree, wherein the number of
partial feasible routing solutions at each node of the routing tree may be limited
5 according to a user-specified limitation.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein identifying partial feasible routing
solutions comprises:

generating Hanan's graph;
10 identifying a first partial feasible routing solution;
adding an obstacle to the first partial feasible routing solution; and
identifying a second, different partial feasible routing solution.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein adding an obstacle and identifying
15 a different partial feasible routing solution are repeated until there are no more
partial feasible routing solutions or until a user-specified limitation on the number
of partial feasible routing solutions has been reached, whichever occurs first.

9. A method comprising:

20 constructing multiple partial feasible routing trees, each of the partial
feasible routing trees identifying a set of partial feasible routing solutions for a
subset of a set of wires to be routed; and

merging the multiple partial feasible routing trees to identify a set of feasible routing solutions for the set of wires to be routed.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein constructing multiple partial feasible
5 routing trees comprises:

determining partial feasible routing solutions for each of the subset of wires to be routed until all partial feasible routing solutions have been identified or until a user-specified limit on the number of partial feasible routing solutions has been reached, whichever occurs first.

10

11. The method of claim 10 wherein determining partial feasible routing solutions comprises:

generating Hanan's graph;
identifying a first partial feasible routing solution;
adding an obstacle to the first partial feasible routing solution; and
identifying a second, different partial feasible routing solution.

12. The method of claim 10 further comprising:

determining a cost of each partial feasible routing solution according to a
20 first user-specified cost function; and
ordering the partial feasible routing solutions by the cost.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein merging comprises:

merging the partial feasible routing solutions in increasing order of cost such that the feasible routing solutions are also ordered by cost.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising:

5 re-ordering the partial feasible routing solutions and feasible routing solutions according to a second user-specified cost function.

15. A method comprising:

determining a first set of possible routes between a first set of points in an
10 integrated circuit layout;

determining a second set of possible routes between a second set of points in the integrated circuit layout;

merging the first and second sets of possible routes to determine a third set of possible routes, the third set of possible routes including possible routes
15 from the first and second sets of possible routes that do not conflict.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising:

ordering the first and second sets of possible routes by cost according to a first user-specified cost function.

20

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising:

limiting the number of possible routes in the first, second and third sets according to one or more user-specified limitations.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein the first, second and third sets are organized as a routing tree, a root of the routing tree to include one or more possible routes for all wires to be routed.

5

19. The method of claim 16 further comprising:
reordering the possible routes by cost according to a second user-specified cost function.

10

20. An apparatus comprising:
an integrated circuit device having wires routed according to a method

comprising:

identifying partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of a subset of a set of wires to be routed;
merging the partial feasible routing solutions to identify one or more feasible routing solutions for the set of wires to be routed; and
selecting the routing from the one or more feasible routing solutions.

15

fe

20

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the method further comprises:
ordering the partial feasible routing solutions by cost according to one or more user-specified cost functions.

22. A data storage medium storing instructions to be executed by a computer system, the instructions comprising:

a maze router to determine partial feasible routing solutions between each of a subset of a set of wires to be routed; and

5 a deferred merging router to merge the partial feasible routing solutions to generate one or more feasible routing solutions.

23. The data storage medium of claim 22 further storing instructions comprising:

10 a first estimation engine to determine a first cost of each partial feasible routing solution and each feasible routing solution according to a first user-specified cost function,

the deferred merging router responsive to the first estimation engine to order the partial feasible routing solutions and the feasible routing solutions by
15 the first cost.

24. The data storage medium of claim 22 wherein the maze router is responsive to a user-specified limitation to limit the number of partial feasible routing solutions and feasible routing solutions determined for any of the subset
20 of wires to be routed.

25. The data storage medium of claim 24 wherein the deferred merging router organizes the partial feasible routing solutions in a routing tree to identify the feasible routing solutions.

5 26. The data storage medium of claim 23 wherein
the deferred merging router is responsive to a second estimation engine
to re-order the partial feasible routing solutions and the one or more routing
solutions according to a second user-specified cost function.

10 27. A data storage medium storing instructions which, when executed
by a computer system, cause the computer system to perform a method
comprising:
 identifying partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of a
subset of a set of wires to be routed;
 merging the partial feasible routing solutions to identify one or more
feasible routing solutions for the set of wires to be routed.

15 28. The data storage medium of claim 27 further storing instructions
which, when executed by a computer system cause the computer system to
20 perform a method further comprising:
 sorting the identified partial feasible routing solutions and feasible routing
solutions by a first user-selected cost function.

29. The data storage medium of claim 28 further storing instructions which, when executed by a computer system cause the computer system to perform a method further comprising:

- re-sorting the identified partial feasible routing solutions and feasible
5 routing solutions by a second, different user-selected cost function.

30. The data storage medium of claim 27 further storing instructions which, when executed by a computer system cause the computer system to perform a method further comprising:

- 10 limiting the number of partial feasible routing solutions identified to a first number; and
limiting the number of feasible routing solutions to a second number.

ABSTRACT

A deferred merging router. Partial feasible routing solutions corresponding to each of a subset of a set of wires to be routed are identified. the partial feasible routing solutions are then merged to identify one or more 5 feasible routing solutions for the set of wires to be routed. In one aspect of the invention, the final routing for an integrated circuit device may then be selected from the feasible routing solutions which may be ordered by one or more user-selected cost functions.

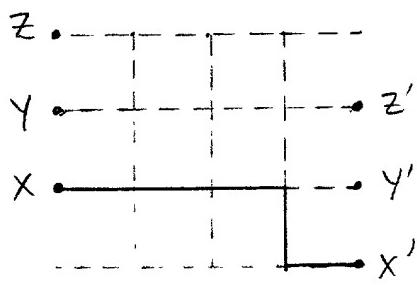


FIGURE 1

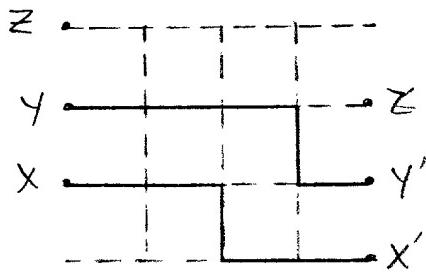


FIGURE 2

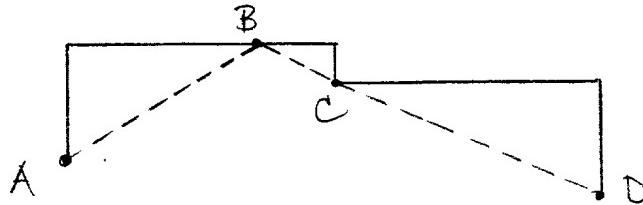


FIGURE 3

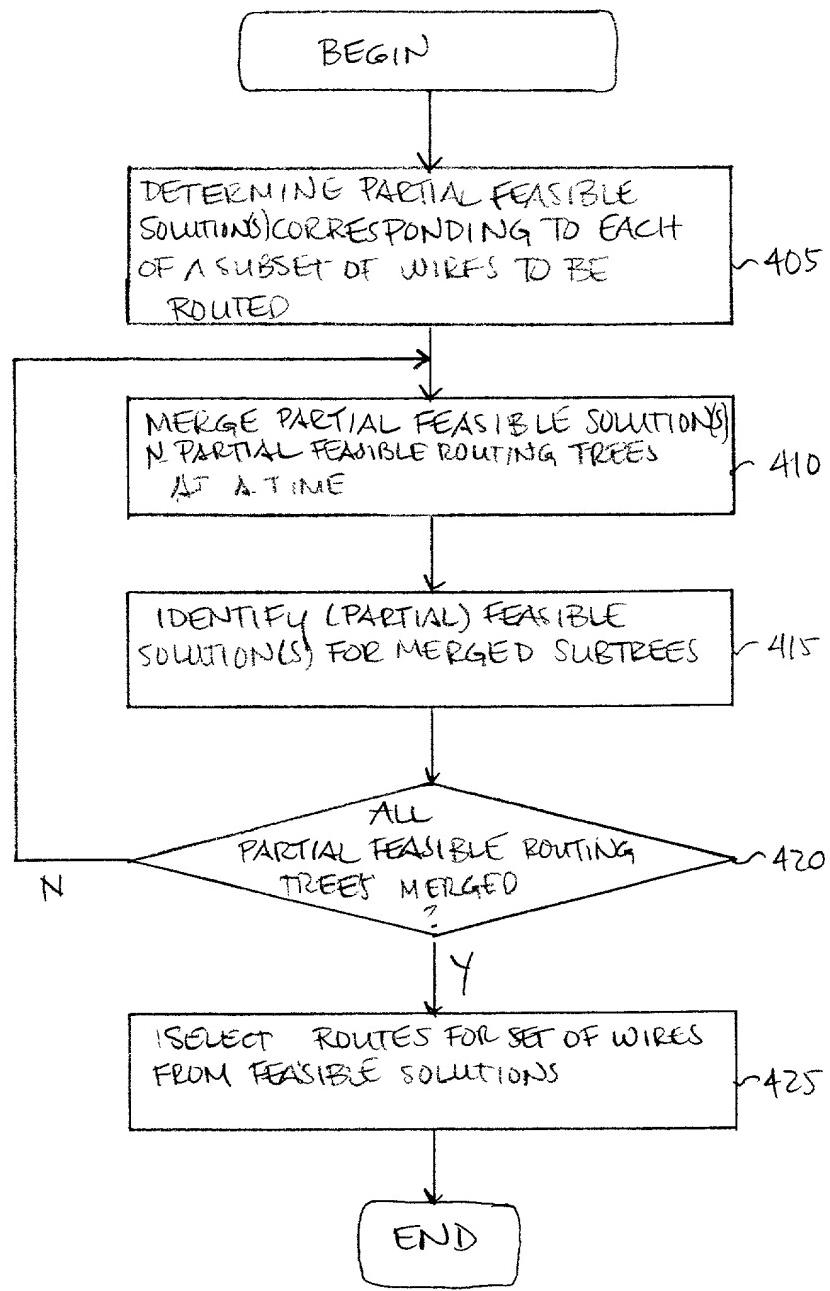


FIGURE 4

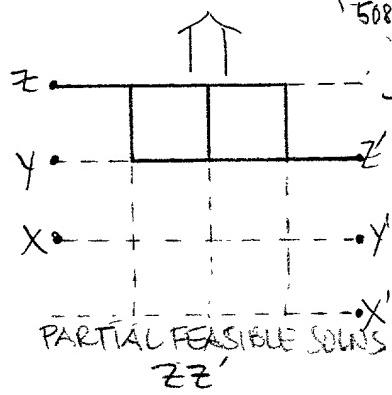
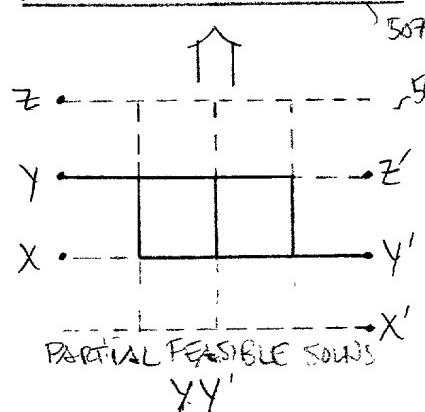
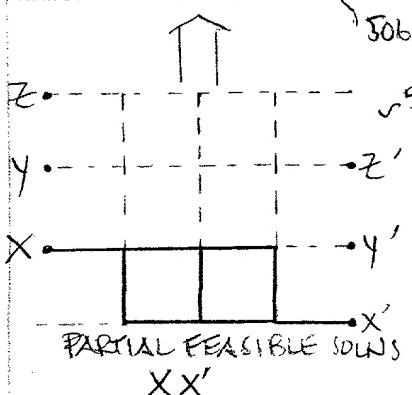
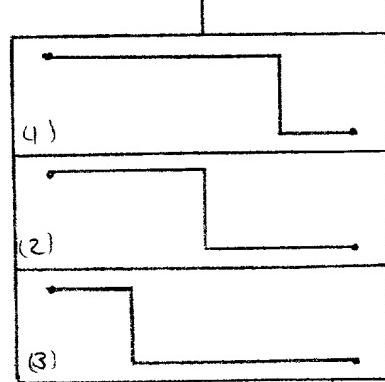
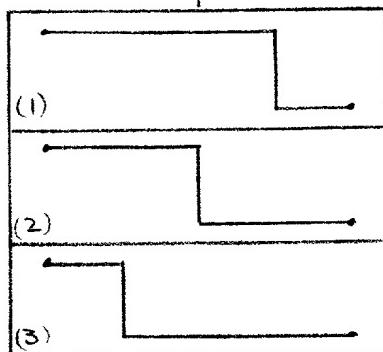
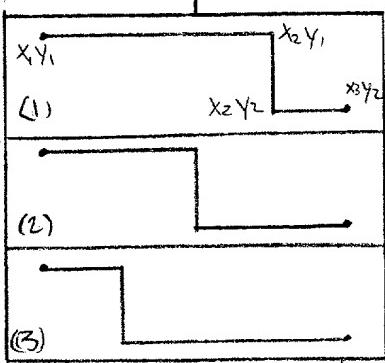
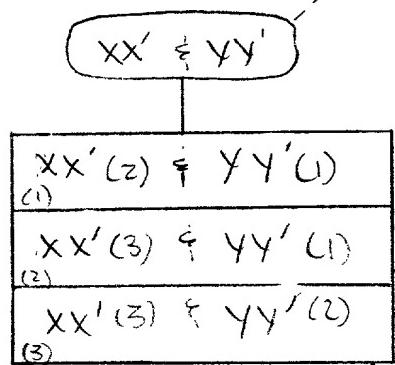
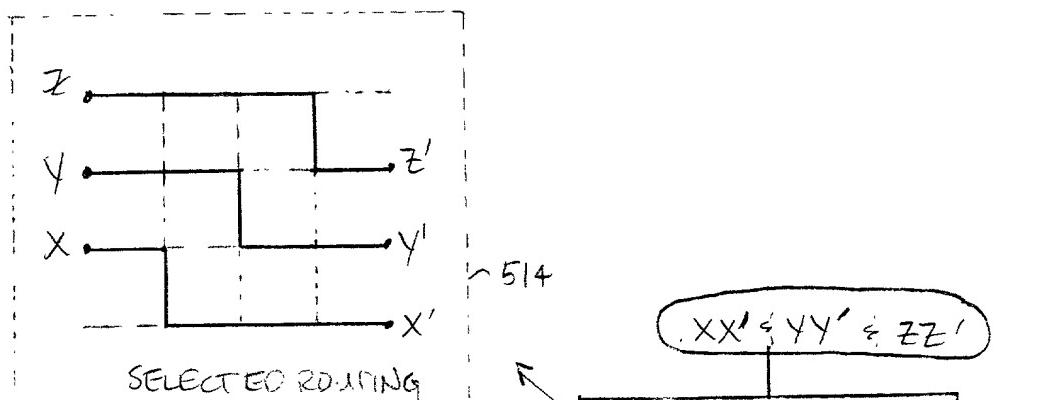


FIGURE 5

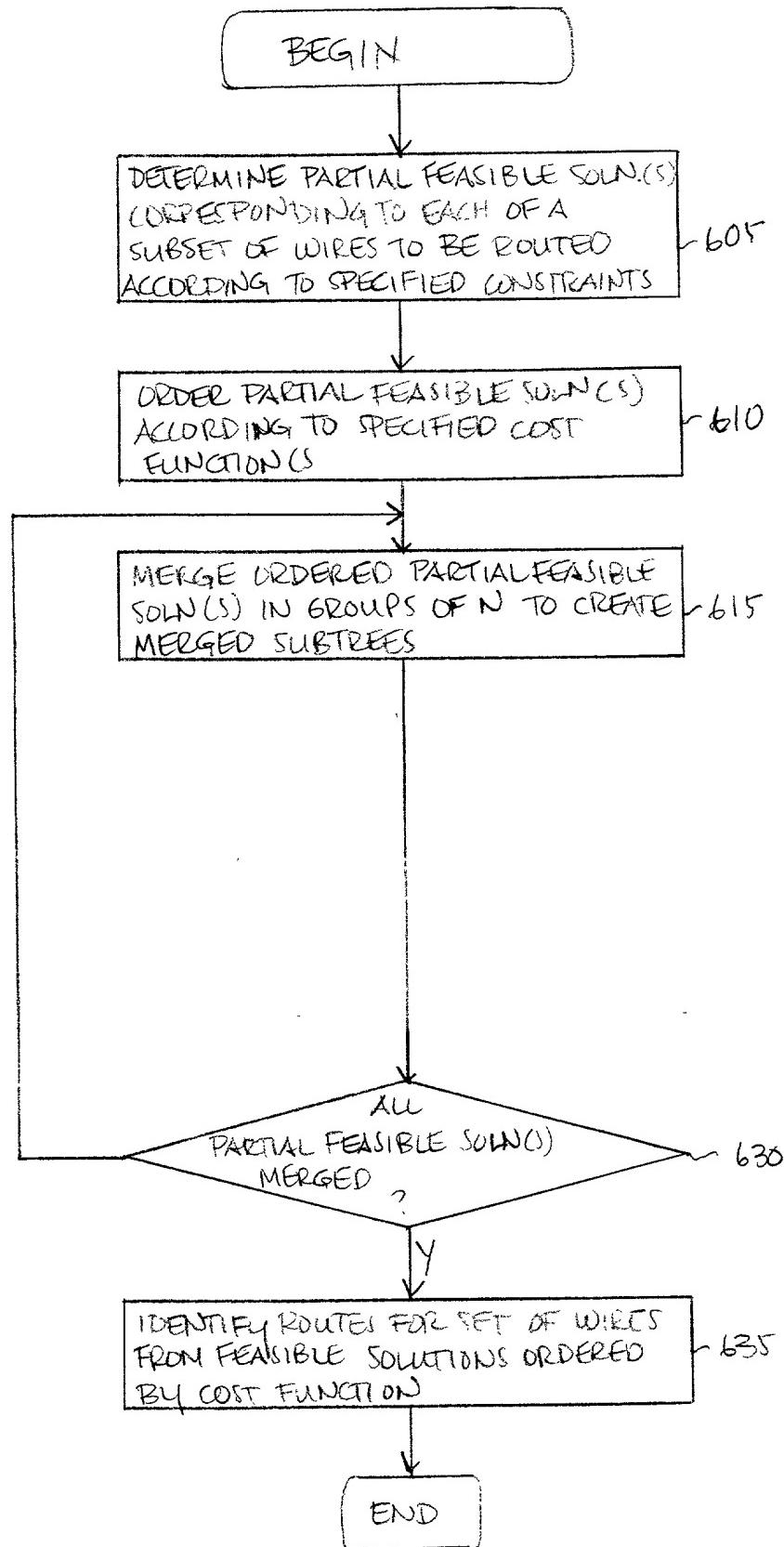
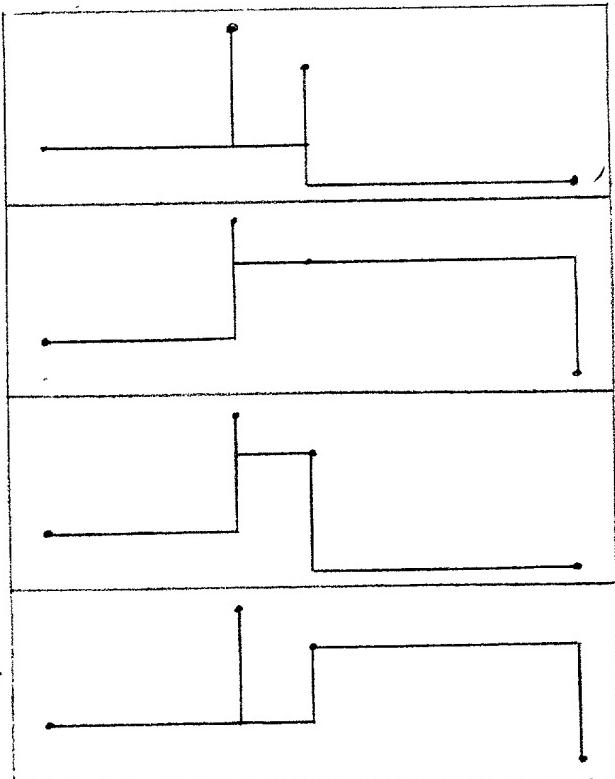
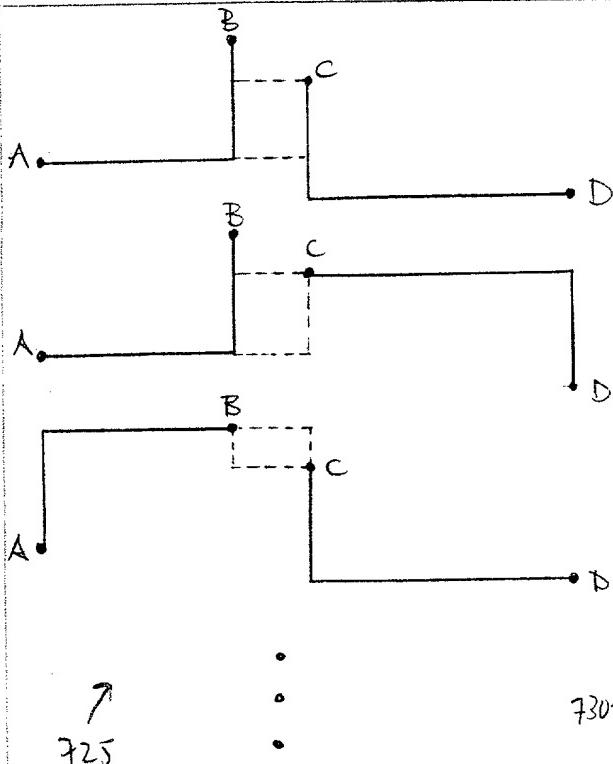


FIGURE 6



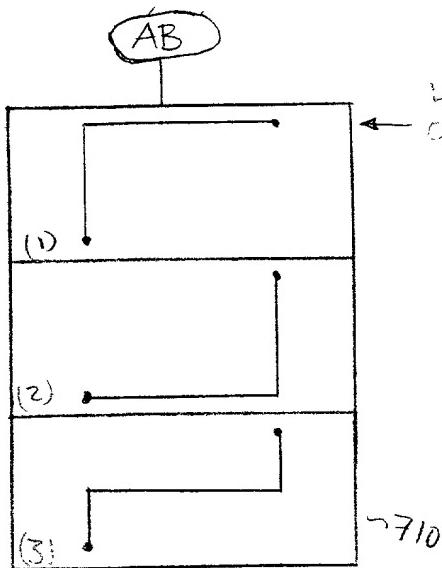
FEASIBLE SOLNS ABCD

#SOLNS = 2

HEAP DEPTH = 4

SORTED BY:

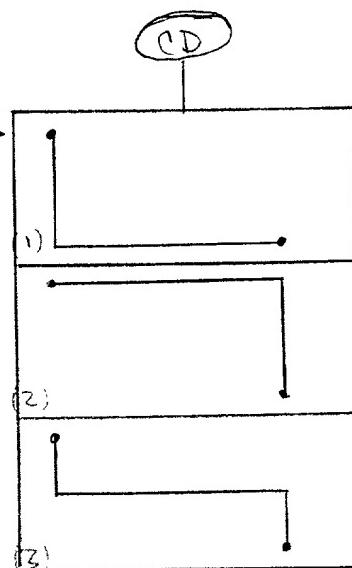
- 1) WIRE LENGTH
 - 2) SOURCE TO SINK DELAY



LOWEST
- COST 50

← COST SOLN. -

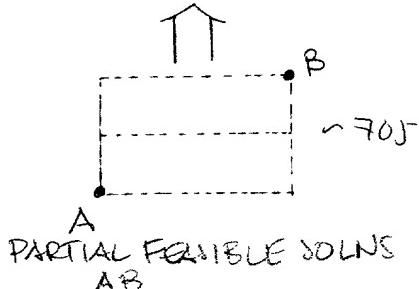
7710



#SOLNS = 3
HEAD DEPTH = 3

SORTED BY:
1) WIRE LENGTH
2) SOURCE TO
SINK DELAY

-72-



A PARTIAL FEASIBLE SOLNS AB

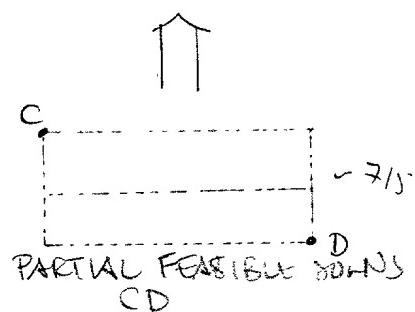


FIGURE 7

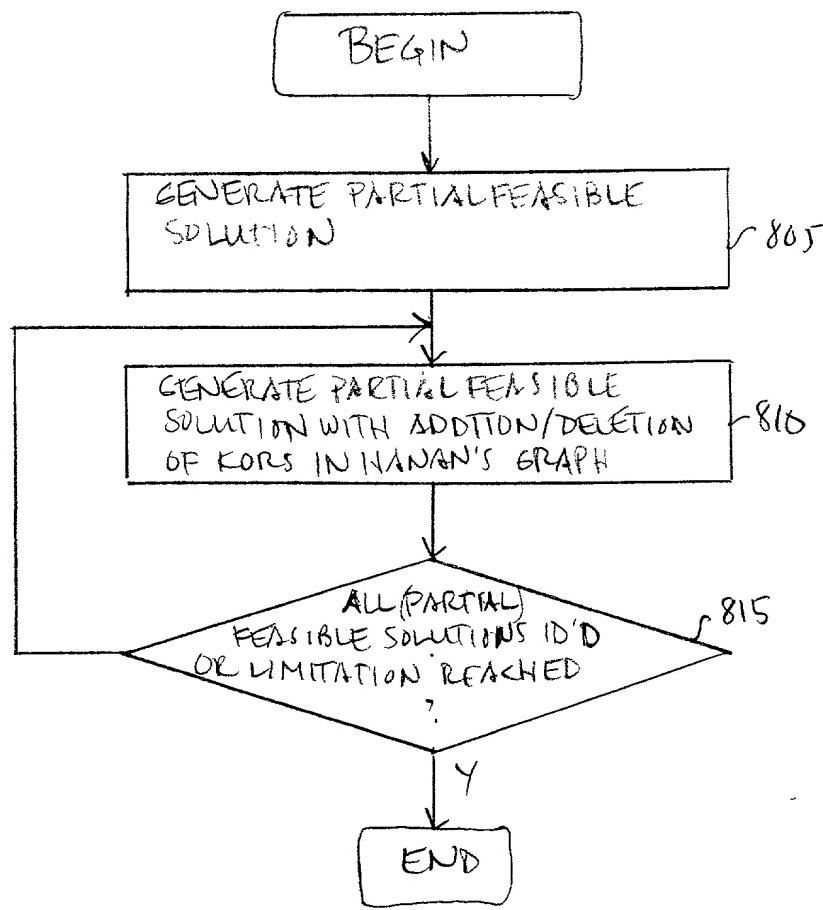


FIGURE 8

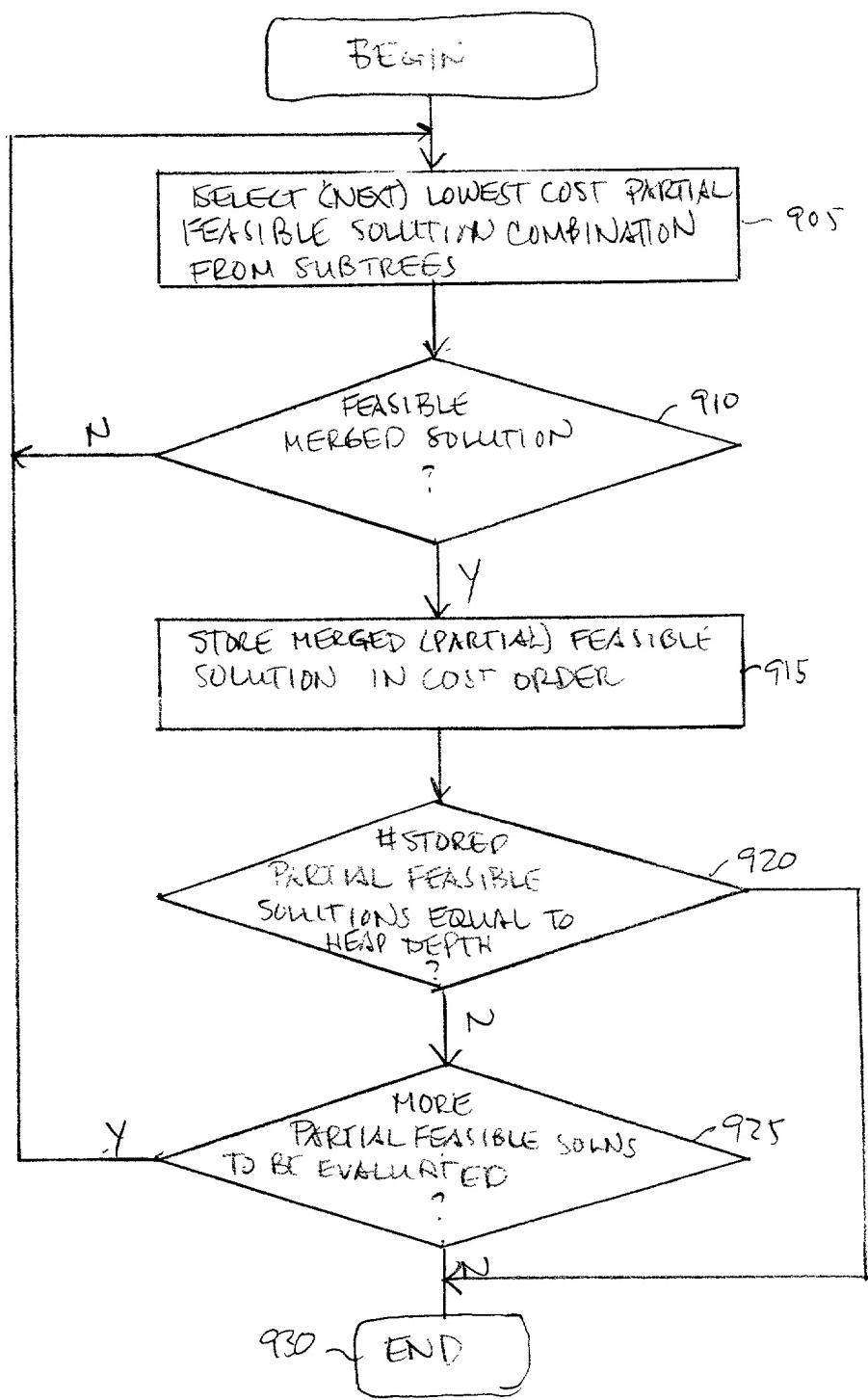
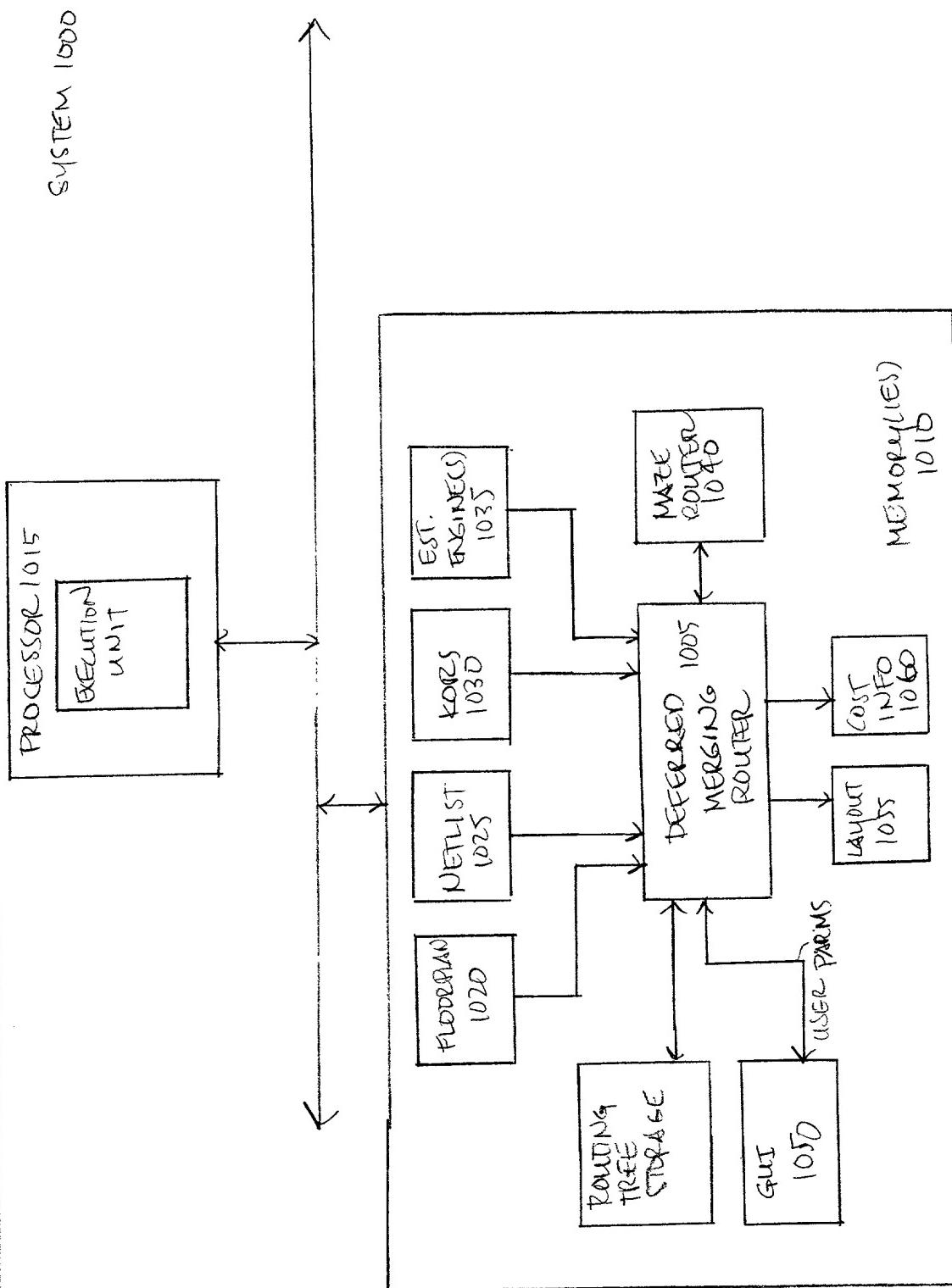


FIGURE 9

FIGURE 10



SYSTEM 1000

22.1.1 50 SHEETS
22.1.2 100 SHEETS
22.1.4 200 SHEETS

Microtron
22.1.3 300 SHEETS
22.1.4 400 SHEETS
22.1.5 500 SHEETS
22.1.6 600 SHEETS
22.1.7 700 SHEETS
22.1.8 800 SHEETS
22.1.9 900 SHEETS
22.1.10 1000 SHEETS
22.1.11 1100 SHEETS
22.1.12 1200 SHEETS
22.1.13 1300 SHEETS
22.1.14 1400 SHEETS
22.1.15 1500 SHEETS
22.1.16 1600 SHEETS
22.1.17 1700 SHEETS
22.1.18 1800 SHEETS
22.1.19 1900 SHEETS
22.1.20 2000 SHEETS
22.1.21 2100 SHEETS
22.1.22 2200 SHEETS
22.1.23 2300 SHEETS
22.1.24 2400 SHEETS
22.1.25 2500 SHEETS
22.1.26 2600 SHEETS
22.1.27 2700 SHEETS
22.1.28 2800 SHEETS
22.1.29 2900 SHEETS
22.1.30 3000 SHEETS
22.1.31 3100 SHEETS
22.1.32 3200 SHEETS
22.1.33 3300 SHEETS
22.1.34 3400 SHEETS
22.1.35 3500 SHEETS
22.1.36 3600 SHEETS
22.1.37 3700 SHEETS
22.1.38 3800 SHEETS
22.1.39 3900 SHEETS
22.1.40 4000 SHEETS
22.1.41 4100 SHEETS
22.1.42 4200 SHEETS
22.1.43 4300 SHEETS
22.1.44 4400 SHEETS
22.1.45 4500 SHEETS
22.1.46 4600 SHEETS
22.1.47 4700 SHEETS
22.1.48 4800 SHEETS
22.1.49 4900 SHEETS
22.1.50 5000 SHEETS
22.1.51 5100 SHEETS
22.1.52 5200 SHEETS
22.1.53 5300 SHEETS
22.1.54 5400 SHEETS
22.1.55 5500 SHEETS
22.1.56 5600 SHEETS
22.1.57 5700 SHEETS
22.1.58 5800 SHEETS
22.1.59 5900 SHEETS
22.1.60 6000 SHEETS
22.1.61 6100 SHEETS
22.1.62 6200 SHEETS
22.1.63 6300 SHEETS
22.1.64 6400 SHEETS
22.1.65 6500 SHEETS
22.1.66 6600 SHEETS
22.1.67 6700 SHEETS
22.1.68 6800 SHEETS
22.1.69 6900 SHEETS
22.1.70 7000 SHEETS
22.1.71 7100 SHEETS
22.1.72 7200 SHEETS
22.1.73 7300 SHEETS
22.1.74 7400 SHEETS
22.1.75 7500 SHEETS
22.1.76 7600 SHEETS
22.1.77 7700 SHEETS
22.1.78 7800 SHEETS
22.1.79 7900 SHEETS
22.1.80 8000 SHEETS
22.1.81 8100 SHEETS
22.1.82 8200 SHEETS
22.1.83 8300 SHEETS
22.1.84 8400 SHEETS
22.1.85 8500 SHEETS
22.1.86 8600 SHEETS
22.1.87 8700 SHEETS
22.1.88 8800 SHEETS
22.1.89 8900 SHEETS
22.1.90 9000 SHEETS
22.1.91 9100 SHEETS
22.1.92 9200 SHEETS
22.1.93 9300 SHEETS
22.1.94 9400 SHEETS
22.1.95 9500 SHEETS
22.1.96 9600 SHEETS
22.1.97 9700 SHEETS
22.1.98 9800 SHEETS
22.1.99 9900 SHEETS
22.1.100 10000 SHEETS

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION
(FOR INTEL CORPORATION PATENT APPLICATIONS)

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below, next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first, and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first, and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

A Method And Apparatus For Routing Using Deferred Merging

the specification of which

is attached hereto.
— was filed on _____ as
United States Application Number _____
or PCT International Application Number _____
and was amended on _____.
(if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claim(s), as amended by any amendment referred to above. I do not know and do not believe that the claimed invention was ever known or used in the United States of America before my invention thereof, or patented or described in any printed publication in any country before my invention thereof or more than one year prior to this application, that the same was not in public use or on sale in the United States of America more than one year prior to this application, and that the invention has not been patented or made the subject of an inventor's certificate issued before the date of this application in any country foreign to the United States of America on an application filed by me or my legal representatives or assigns more than twelve months (for a utility patent application) or six months (for a design patent application) prior to this application.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d), of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

**Priority
Claimed**

(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No
(Number)	(Country)	(Day/Month/Year Filed)	Yes	No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

Application Number	Filing Date
Application Number	Filing Date

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

Application Number	Filing Date	Status -- patented, pending, abandoned
Application Number	Filing Date	Status -- patented, pending, abandoned

I hereby appoint the persons listed on Appendix A hereto (which is incorporated by reference and a part of this document) as my respective patent attorneys and patent agents, with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith.

Send correspondence to Cynthia Thomas Faatz, BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & (Name of Attorney or Agent)
ZAFMAN LLP, 12400 Wilshire Boulevard 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025 and direct telephone calls to Cynthia Thomas Faatz, (408) 720-8598.
(Name of Attorney or Agent)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full Name of Sole/First Inventor Iksoo Pyo

Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

Residence Hillsboro, Oregon Citizenship Korea
(City, State) (Country)

Post Office Address 6056 S.E. Heike Street
Hillsboro, Oregon 97123

Full Name of Second/Joint Inventor Michelle Yu

Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

Residence Hillsboro, Oregon Citizenship U.S.A.
(City, State) (Country)

Post Office Address 6783 N.E. Vining Way #1137
Hillsboro, Oregon 97124

Full Name of Third/Joint Inventor _____

Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

Residence _____ Citizenship _____
(City, State) (Country)

Post Office Address _____

APPENDIX A

William E. Alford, Reg. No. 37,764; Farzad E. Amini, Reg. No. P42,261; Aloysius T. C. AuYeung, Reg. No. 35,432; William Thomas Babbitt, Reg. No. 39,591; Carol F. Barry, Reg. No. 41,600; Jordan Michael Becker, Reg. No. 39,602; Bradley J. Bereznak, Reg. No. 33,474; Michael A. Bernadicou, Reg. No. 35,934; Roger W. Blakely, Jr., Reg. No. 25,831; Gregory D. Caldwell, Reg. No. 39,926; Ronald C. Card, Reg. No. P44,587; Thomas M. Coester, Reg. No. 39,637; Stephen M. De Clerk, under 37 C.F.R. § 10.9(b); Michael Anthony DeSanctis, Reg. No. 39,957; Daniel M. De Vos, Reg. No. 37,813; Robert Andrew Diehl, Reg. No. 40,992; Matthew C. Fagan, Reg. No. 37,542; Tarek N. Fahmi, Reg. No. 41,402; James Y. Go, Reg. No. 40,621; James A. Henry, Reg. No. 41,064; Willmore F. Holbrow III, Reg. No. P41,845; Sheryl Sue Holloway, Reg. No. 37,850; George W Hoover II, Reg. No. 32,992; Eric S. Hyman, Reg. No. 30,139; Dag H. Johansen, Reg. No. 36,172; William W. Kidd, Reg. No. 31,772; Erica W. Kuo, Reg. No. 42,775; Michael J. Mallie, Reg. No. 36,591; Andre L. Marais, under 37 C.F.R. § 10.9(b); Paul A. Mendonsa, Reg. No. 42,879; Darren J. Milliken, Reg. 42,004; Lisa A. Norris, Reg. No. P44,976; Chun M. Ng, Reg. No. 36,878; Thien T. Nguyen, Reg. No. 43,835; Thinh V. Nguyen, Reg. No. 42,034; Dennis A. Nicholls, Reg. No. 42,036; Kimberley G. Nobles, Reg. No. 38,255; Daniel E. Ovanezian, Reg. No. 41,236; Babak Redjaian, Reg. No. 42,096; William F. Ryann, Reg. 44,313; James H. Salter, Reg. No. 35,668; William W. Schaal, Reg. No. 39,018; James C. Scheller, Reg. No. 31,195; Jeffrey Sam Smith, Reg. No. 39,377; Maria McCormack Sobrino, Reg. No. 31,639; Stanley W. Sokoloff, Reg. No. 25,128; Judith A. Szepesi, Reg. No. 39,393; Vincent P. Tassinari, Reg. No. 42,179; Edwin H. Taylor, Reg. No. 25,129; John F. Travis, Reg. No. 43,203; George G. C. Tseng, Reg. No. 41,355; Joseph A. Twarowski, Reg. No. 42,191; Lester J. Vincent, Reg. No. 31,460; Glenn E. Von Tersch, Reg. No. 41,364; John Patrick Ward, Reg. No. 40,216; Charles T. J. Weigell, Reg. No. 43,398; Kirk D. Williams, Reg. No. 42,229; James M. Wu, Reg. No. P45,241; Steven D. Yates, Reg. No. 42,242; Ben J. Yorks, Reg. No. 33,609; and Norman Zafman, Reg. No. 26,250; my patent attorneys, and Andrew C. Chen, Reg. No. 43,544; Justin M. Dillon, Reg. No. 42,486; Paramita Ghosh, Reg. No. 42,806; and Sang Hui Kim, Reg. No. 40,450; my patent agents, of BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP, with offices located at 12400 Wilshire Boulevard, 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025, telephone (310) 207-3800, and Alan K. Aldous, Reg. No. 31,905; Robert D. Anderson, Reg. No. 33,826; Joseph R. Bond, Reg. No. 36,458; Richard C. Calderwood, Reg. No. 35,468; Jeffrey S. Draeger, Reg. No. 41,000; Cynthia Thomas Faatz, Reg. No. 39,973; Sean Fitzgerald, Reg. No. 32,027; Seth Z. Kalson, Reg. No. 40,670; David J. Kaplan, Reg. No. 41,105; Charles A. Mirho, Reg. No. 41,199; Leo V. Novakoski, Reg. No. 37,198; Naomi Obinata, Reg. No. 39,320; Thomas C. Reynolds, Reg. No. 32,488; Kenneth M. Seddon, Reg. No. 43,105; Mark Seeley, Reg. No. 32,299; Steven P. Skabrat, Reg. No. 36,279; Howard A. Skaist, Reg. No. 36,008; Steven C. Stewart, Reg. No. 33,555; Raymond J. Werner, Reg. No. 34,752; Robert G. Winkle, Reg. No. 37,474; and Charles K. Young, Reg. No. 39,435; my patent attorneys, and Thomas Raleigh Lane, Reg. No. 42,781; Calvin E. Wells; Reg. No. P43,256, Peter Lam, Reg. No. P44,855; and Gene I. Su, Reg. No. 45,140; my patent agents, of INTEL CORPORATION; and James R. Thein, Reg. No. 31,710, my patent attorney; with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith.

APPENDIX B

Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 Duty to Disclose Information Material to Patentability

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclosure information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclosure all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

(1) Prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and

(2) The closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.

(b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made or record in the application, and

(1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim; or

(2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:

(i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or

(ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

(1) Each inventor named in the application;

(2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and

(3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.

(d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.